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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NAIROBI 000633

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: PARLIAMENT STUMBLES TOWARD BAIDOA

REF: NAIROBI 428

CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR MICHAEL J. FITZPATRICK,  
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) The Somali President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of the Parliament gathered over the February 11 weekend to iron out their differences over holding the first-ever session of the Somali Parliament inside Somalia. Politicians from the Haber Gedir clan met the same weekend to seek an end to heavy combat among the Sa'ad and Suleiman sub-clans in Mudug Region; warlords of the Rahanweyne (Mirifle) clans were also meeting to reconcile and make security arrangements for the parliamentary session. The head of the Speaker's Parliamentary session preparatory committee headed to Baidoa, the declared venue of session, to find a town devastated by 15 years of combat -- and empty of warlords. The European Commission and bilateral donors prepared to front-load sitting allowances and transport costs to support the session. END SUMMARY

THE WARLORD, THE TRUCKER ...  
AND THE IRRELEVANT  
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¶2. (C) Somalia Watcher's contacts confirmed February 11 press reports that the three key figureheads in the Somali Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) -- TF President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, the Speaker of the TF Parliament (TFP), Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, and the Prime Minister of the TF Government (TFG), Ali Mohamed Gedi, all assembled in the central Mudug Region town of Galkaiyo to sort out their differences. With the President and Speaker making common cause since their January 5 signing of the so-called Aden Declaration (reftel), Prime Minister Gedi has been the odd man out, with the support of a dwindling number of MPs, and only one key minister -- Abdirizak Osman Hassan (AKA "Jurile"), Minister for International Cooperation.

¶3. (C) Somalis of all clans, including the PM's own Hawiye Abgal Warsangeli, describe Gedi as a dead politician walking -- irrelevant, other than as a presentable mouthpiece for

his mercurial cousin, warlord Mohamed Omar Habeb (AKA "Dheere"). Mohamed Dheere appears desperate to ensure that the splinter group within the TFIs that has passed for "government" since June, 2005 remain together in the town of Jowhar, capital of Dheere's self-proclaimed Governorship of Middle Shabelle Region. Taking the Parliament to Baidoa would create an alternative center of gravity for the largest, most broadly representative of the institutions. Dheere has profited from his hegemony over the "interim capital", and stands to lose much should Parliament not join the splinter TFG in Jowhar.

14. (C) Early indications from Galkaiyo were that Gedi was trying to impose his authority over the organization of the parliamentary session. The Speaker on January 31 named a five-member technical committee, which immediately began initial meetings with donors, humanitarian relief agencies, and the broader international community -- while the PM was in Jowhar arguing against both the choice of Baidoa and the process by which it was chosen as parliamentary venue. Gedi again appeared to be coming on board too late, with organizational work well under way, and the preparatory committee already in Baidoa.

HABER GEDIR, RAHANWEYNE  
RECONCILIATION  
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15. (C) As the TFI figureheads met in Galkaiyo, "politicians" of the Hawiye Haber Gedir Sa'ad and Suleiman sub-clans engaged with elders in South Galkaiyo in an attempt to again mediate a cessation of hostilities among their clansmen. Sa'ad and Suleiman fighters have waged intra-clan warfare

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for months over long-held grievances related to access to water and grazing throughout Mudug and Galguduud Regions (known as the epicenter of all Somali conflict). Minister for Public Works (and financier to warlords) Osman Hassan Ali (AKA "Atto") from the Sa'ad and State Minister for Ports Mohamed Jama Furu of the Suleiman were reported to be working to implement an agreement within the sub-clans reached in January.

16. (C) Perhaps of greater significance were talks among warlords of the Mirifle sub-clans of the Rahanweyne. Minister of Justice Sheikh Adan Mohamed Nur (AKA "Adan Madobe") reportedly joined with rival Mohamed Ibrahim Habsade in the town of Wajid, about 50 kms north of Baidoa, to reconcile Habsade with Minister for Agriculture Hassan Mohamed Nur (AKA "Shatigudud"). Heavy fighting in Baidoa in May 2005 between Shatigudud's Mirifle Harin and Habsade's Mirifle Leysan communities left a good number of dead and wounded in its wake, with Shatigudud getting the worst of it. The Rahanweyne warlords, apparently supportive of the TFP Speaker's commitment to bring the Parliament to Baidoa, seemed determined to ensure that their intra-clan conflict would not give any other Somali politicians an excuse to not attend the session.

BAIDOA -- LITTLE WITH WHICH TO WORK  
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17. (C) The head of the Speaker's preparatory committee, One time Deputy PM for Information and former UN bureaucrat Mohamoud Abdullahi Jama (AKA "Sifir") called Somalia Watcher February 11 from Baidoa. He described a town devastated by 15 years of conflict, with very little food, and growing incidences of measles among the children. Stating that the town had "nothing", he then said the parliament would be able make do for lodging, and could hold its session in a tent, but worried about the near total lack of sanitation and the extreme shortage of water. Noting that Habsade had left Baidoa to meet Adan Madobe and Shatigudud in Wajid, Sifir joked that he was the only "warlord" in town.

18. (C) Representatives of bilateral donors Norway, Sweden, and the UK, as well as of the Delegation of the European Commission in Nairobi, reported to the Somalia Donors Group that they had reached agreement with the preparatory committee over initial levels of funding for the Baidoa session, to be disbursed through the UNDP-administered Emergency Institution Building Program (EIBP) fund. The Speaker had successfully argued for the UNDP to disburse first payments up-front, given that a financial incentive could make a big difference to severely indebted MPs who might be influenced not to attend the session. The EIBP donors' steering committee agreed to provide a lump sum transportation payment of \$200 per MP, and a front-loaded "sitting allowance" of \$40/day for the first 15 days, to begin from February 15 -- the day the Speaker had set for all MPs to be present in Baidoa.

COMMENT:

19. (C) Various clan- and politically-based constituencies seem to be positioning themselves so as not to take the blame should the February 26 session of parliament in Baidoa fail to materialize. The warlords of the Rahanweyne Mirifle, long among the most deeply divided of the large Somali clans, are talking; the TFI figureheads are talking; even the Sa'ad and the Suleiman are talking. Somali observers and members of the international community are now giving even odds that the session will go forward, more or less on time. That the Prime Minister continues to be less-than-constructive in his approach is probably a reflection of his fear that, without a central role in the proceedings, he will quickly be further marginalized, if not removed from office. More important to the success or failure of the

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Baidoa session is the behavior of Jowhar's unpredictable headman, Mohamed Dheere, but he also appears uncertain of how to promote his parochial interests. There is no one among the obvious potential spoilers with the ability to disrupt Baidoa through direct military confrontation, with the exception of the Mirifle warlords themselves. Still completely unknown is what is be on the parliament's agenda, and whether this might be controversial enough to bring the institution down, were it to finally meet. END COMMENT.

BELLAMY